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SUBJECT: TURKEY: CODEL TANNER DISCUSSES EU, TERRORISM AND ENERGY
WITH ADANA GOVERNOR ILHAN ATIS

¶1. (SBU) CODEL Tanner met with Adana Governor Ilhan Atis on May 30. During the meeting, participants discussed topics covering Turkey's European Union accession process, security and terrorism, and energy. Atis said Turkey's bid for the EU was motivated by a desire to improve technology and economic wherewithal, and anchor itself in "comparable wisdom." When asked why he thought the Europeans were putting obstacles in Turkey's way, the Governor said it was because Turkey was a Muslim country, adding French President Sarkozy's latest remarks had proved this. Atis thanked the representatives for the United States' enduring support on Turkey's EU accession, noting the incongruity of some European countries that Turkey protected during the Cold War on NATO's flanks were now blocking her membership bid. He also insisted that Turkey's democracy and economy are fully on par with those of the former Warsaw Pact that are currently EU members.

¶2. (SBU) Atis also expressed his gratitude for recent U.S. support with the fight against the PKK. He noted that this issue had caused ups and down in the bilateral relationship, and his perception of American disregard for Turkey's terrorism problem had, at one time, "left him cold." But, with the cooperation between America and the United States - whether against the PKK or al-Qaida in Afghanistan - he said terrorism would soon be snuffed out. When one member asked his thoughts on radical Islam-based religious terrorism, Atis dismissed the religious element. Terrorists are simply terrorists, he said, and what justification they use to propagate terror was irrelevant.

¶3. (SBU) Chairman Tanner asked about the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, noting Turkey's strategic regional role as a transit country and future as an energy hub. Atis praised the United States for helping to secure the pipeline through Turkish territory, and said plans were underway for turning the Ceyhan area, which will include three shipbuilding docks, a free industrialized zone, and up to three refineries, into a vital energy hub.

¶4. (SBU) The evening of May 30, the Turkish-American Business Association (TABA) hosted a reception for the 29-person delegation. During opening speeches, TABA officials called for increased trade between the United States and Turkey, and made an appeal for more direct investment. The president of TABA's local chapter referenced the Armenian Genocide Resolution, calling it a "fabrication" and stating it should not continue to cast a shadow over the bilateral relationship. While in Adana, the delegation also received a briefing and tour of Incirlik Air Force Base, with an emphasis on the facility's on-going support for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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